

## **The First 50 Women in Idaho Law**

### **BERTHA STULL GREEN**

**December 8, 1904**

**(1875 – 1933)**



**Bertha Stull Green** was born in Illinois in 1875 to Morris C. and Maria (Huntoon) Stull. Her father was a judge, and the family lived in Nebraska on a farm and then in Lincoln. Green graduated from Doane College in Crete, Nebraska, with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1893. While in college, Green represented the University of Nebraska on Inter-State debates for two consecutive years and was the valedictorian of her college class. After college, Green attended the University of Nebraska and graduated with a Bachelor of Laws degree in 1899. A professor at the law school said hers was the most brilliant mind he had ever had in his class. On June 15, 1899, Green became the 22<sup>nd</sup> woman admitted to the Nebraska bar.

In 1904, Green married fellow attorney Leslie Brooks Green in Lincoln. Shortly thereafter, the couple moved to Mountain Home, Idaho, and Green was admitted as the second woman to practice law in Idaho on December 8, 1904. Green practiced law with her husband in the firm of “Green & Green” in Mountain Home. Green may have been lured to Mountain Home because a relative, Homer Stull, had settled in Mountain Home and made a name for himself as a prominent attorney and delegate from Elmore County to the 1889 Idaho State Constitutional Convention.

Green had three children: Marion, Walter and Arthur. When her children were young and she had an active law practice, including the need to appear in court, Green needed a babysitter. Years later, it was told that Green instructed her babysitter, Mrs. Reed, “do not hold or rock the baby.” Green explained that she did not spoil her children and did not want anyone else to spoil them for her (much to the consternation of Mrs. Reed).

Green made an impact on the Mountain Home community almost immediately upon her arrival, often being described as an “enthusiastic club woman.” There were three women’s clubs in Mountain Home in the early 1900s and Green belonged to all of them, including the Mother’s Club. Having a trained legal mind and great desire to interest women in the laws which governed them and their children, Green’s club interests were always legislative. To that end, in 1909 she compiled a booklet entitled “Laws of Idaho, Concerning Women and Children.” The booklet was distributed to women’s clubs throughout Idaho and used as a reference book for years. Green was also a member of the Civic Club of Mountain Home (formerly the Entre Nous Club and Sub Rosa Club) and one of the earliest presidents of the Idaho Federation of Women’s Clubs.

Green served as chairman of the Legislative Committee of the Idaho State Federation of Women’s Clubs almost continuously for fifteen years. As such, Green was one of the best-known women in Idaho public life. During this time she actively lobbied the Idaho

legislature on various bills, including child labor laws, the “Nine Hour Day” for working women bill (a compromise measure with advocates of an eight-hour law), community property laws (including a bill to require a woman’s signature before a husband could sell community property) and “the Lazy Husband” bill. Green was also instrumental in passing a bill for the Children’s Home Finding and Aid Society of Idaho, which established the Children’s Home in Boise in 1908 on land donated by pioneering Boise teacher Cynthia Mann. Green also served for four years as a member of the Legislative Committee of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, as a member of the Daughters of Veterans, the Order of the Eastern Star, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and was active in the Progressive (Republican) Party of Mountain Home. In fact, in one campaign she was the Republican candidate for prosecuting attorney against her husband, the Democratic candidate (her husband won the election). On top of all this, Green found time to earn the distinction of being the first woman in Mountain Home to hold the position of School Trustee.

In 1923, Green was a delegate, as the Idaho State President of the Federation of Women’s Clubs, to the National Federation of Women’s Clubs convention in Los Angeles. Perhaps liking what she saw in California, Green and her family decided to move there in the 1920s. Green’s children Arthur and Marion eventually moved to New York; Walter was killed in an auto accident when he was returning to college after a vacation.

In addition to being quite intelligent and active in her community, Green was described by a neighbor as “one of the most beautiful women I have known,” explaining:

She was tall and slender and very feminine, a woman who could wear flowers in her hair with great charm. And quite often she did wear them so with evening attire, for she was very feminine.

On December 15, 1933, at the age of 58, Green died in Van Nuys, California.